



## **YOUTH COUNTER-RADICALIZATION PROGRAM: A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF DOMESTIC SECURITY**

**Date:** September 18, 2025

*Disclaimer: This briefing note contains the encapsulation of views presented by the speaker and does not exclusively represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.*

### **KEY EVENTS**

On September 18th, 2025, Ms. Lila Green presented *Youth Counter-Radicalization Program: A Practical Application of Domestic Security*. The presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period with questions from the audience and CASIS Vancouver executives. Ms. Green's presentation focused on school-based, primary-prevention programming to address youth online radicalization, which she argues has now become an urgent requirement rather than an optional add-on. To meet this need, Ms. Green outlined how security-sector practitioners should co-deliver content with educators to close the persistent gap between high-quality materials and the students who need them, ensuring instruction that is both realistic and empathetic. She relied on evidence from a Vancouver School Board pilot she undertook at John Oliver Secondary which showed that this model works. The key findings demonstrated how students reported substantial knowledge gains and strong support for continuing and expanding the program. Building on this momentum, the program is now set to be scaled to new schools and districts, adding teacher professional development, and seeking long-term integration into curricula alongside parent-education components.

### **NATURE OF DISCUSSION**

Ms. Green framed youth counter-radicalization as an institutional response grounded in recent academic advances and shifting public-safety priorities. She outlined how practitioner-led, school-embedded programs can move beyond static toolkits and one-off workshops by pairing teachers' classroom expertise with security professionals' threat-awareness. She described the practical realities of launching a novel program: cultivating partnerships (school board

administrators, classroom teachers, community organizations), aligning with recent calls to action, complete with full lesson plans.

In the classroom, Ms. Green’s approach emphasized empathy, imaginal-space role-play, and structured analysis of extremist media to demystify narratives, identify red-flags, and practice pro-social responses. The discussion highlighted outcomes from the pilot: students reported substantially improved understanding of radicalization/counter-radicalization, produced original counter-narratives (e.g., a prototype “choose-your-own-adventure” game and student-made PSAs), and recommended training significantly more “safe adults” across the youth ecosystem (teachers, coaches, librarians, Elders). Green stressed that trust, continuity, and “making it fun” are central to durable prevention, and that quarterly teacher professional development and ongoing parent coaching are needed to sustain gains.

## BACKGROUND

### Presentation

Ms. Green’s presentation traced the timeline from idea to implementation, beginning with her 2024–25 International Affairs Fellowship with the Council on Foreign Relations (hosted by CASIS Vancouver) and culminating in a pilot program launched with the Vancouver School Board in February 2025. Early outreach through postsecondary partners facilitated introductions to district leaders who, facing escalating concerns about online harms, eagerly approved a classroom-embedded pilot at John Oliver Secondary. From the outset, Green positioned the work as primary prevention, designed to reach youth *before* exposure hardens into harm, and to equip the adults around them to respond constructively.

The project combined design-thinking practices (brainstorming, group ideation) with theater-informed “imaginal space” techniques drawn from depth psychology. Students were cast as “junior analysts” tasked with assessing extremist texts and imagery, practicing neutral description, interrogating rhetorical and visual choices, and linking them to underlying motives, vulnerabilities, and potential interventions. This focus (curiosity without sensationalism) reduced the mystique of extremist content, allowed difficult conversations about identity and belonging, and created space for pro-social action (e.g., peer support, help-seeking, de-escalation).

Implementation lessons featured heavily. Ms. Green described how practitioner-delivered courses bridge the gap between static materials and over-extended educators. She urged moving beyond one-day assemblies toward multi-week courses, with open availability for private conversations and clear referral pathways where appropriate. The pilot's evaluation included 28 pre/post surveys: median self-rated understanding rose from 1/10 to 8/10; 100% of respondents wanted the course to continue in-district, and 93% supported expansion to other cities. Student deliverables (PSAs, game prototypes) and recommendations informed program refinements.

Looking ahead, Ms. Green outlined scalability, this included repeat delivery at John Oliver as well as expansion to more schools, and the normalisation of a counter-radicalisation curriculum as part of health/civics from Grades 6-12. She proposed standardized national professional development for teachers, parent coaching, and models to adapt content across provinces and communities. Throughout, she emphasized long-term relationships, iterative improvement, and a whole-ecosystem approach that aligns academia, practitioners, schools, families, and the arts.

### **Question and Answer**

*What trends or patterns did you notice that led to you pursuing youth counter radicalization? Are there any specific cases in particular that led to this interest?*

Ms. Green contended that effective situational awareness begins with genuine conversation and careful observation, which reveal gaps that practitioners themselves may not initially recognize. Through discussions with contacts in Canada and the United States, she had identified a shortage of accessible educational materials and noted that teachers, already overburdened, lack the time and capacity to find, digest, and apply such resources. While educators could eventually serve as frontline actors in this domain, Ms. Green assessed that they currently need sustained exposure and support before they can effectively take on that role, which should be prioritized.

*As extremist content continues to proliferate online, what do you see as the most urgent gaps in digital literacy and resilience training among youth?*

In Ms. Green's view, teachers cannot absorb additional educational burdens, making it essential for trained practitioners to enter classrooms directly to engage youth and deliver relevant security-related content. She contends that working with young people is both fundamental and enriching, as it allows practitioners

to understand students' real experiences within gaming, meme, and online cultures, including exposure to misogynistic or harmful content. Ms. Green highlighted a major gap in providing youth with credible instructions and safe, judgment-free spaces to discuss these issues, especially amid rising "cringe culture" that suppresses authentic expression. She concluded that practitioners could fill this gap by serving as trusted, knowledgeable sources outside the roles of educators, parents, or law enforcement.

### KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- **Observation and gaps:** Effective counter-radicalization starts with listening and observation. While many resources exist, teachers often lack the time or training to use them. This creates a gap where practitioners must step in to connect materials with students in meaningful ways.
- **Practitioners in the classroom:** Teachers are already overburdened, making it unrealistic to add complex security responsibilities to their workload. Security-sector professionals should deliver counter-radicalization content directly, ensuring youth receive accurate guidance and safe spaces for discussion.
- **Safe and authentic spaces:** Young people need non-judgmental spaces beyond parental or law enforcement lenses. Authentic, long-term programming fosters trust and gives students tools to interpret and resist extremist content, countering buzzwords or "word salad" approaches that lack real impact.
- **Belonging and development:** For youth, online and offline worlds are cognitively inseparable. Belonging must be reinforced across multiple spaces – school, home, online communities – so students do not retreat exclusively into digital environments where algorithms can push them toward radicalization.
- **Empowerment and fun:** Positioning youth as "heroes of the story" empowers them to become ambassadors of resilience. Making programs enjoyable through creative outputs like PSAs and games ensures engagement and retention, transforming prevention from fear-based training into meaningful cultural shifts.



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